

Kosmas Calls on President to Shift Unspent Recovery Funds to NASA

Leads FL Delegation in Bipartisan Letter Calling for at Least \$3 Billion for Human Spaceflight Program

October 16, 2009

(Washington, DC) — Today, Congresswoman Suzanne Kosmas (FL-24) and Congressman Bill Posey (R-FL-15), along with Senator Bill Nelson (D-FL), led members of the Florida Congressional Delegation in sending a letter to President Obama calling on him to shift at least \$3 billion in unspent Recovery Act funds to NASA's human spaceflight program. The letter is in response to the Review of Human Space Flight Plans Committee's report summary which states that, "[t]he U.S. human spaceflight program appears to be on an unsustainable trajectory...and no plan compatible with the FY 2010 budget profile permits human exploration to continue in any meaningful way."

"The Augustine Committee has made it clear that NASA needs at least \$3 billion more a year to conduct meaningful space exploration, and we must take action now to protect jobs and maintain our global leadership in space by properly funding our human spaceflight program," said Congresswoman Kosmas. "Space exploration, with its numerous scientific, technological, and economic benefits, is an ideal target for Recovery Act funds, which are intended to protect and create jobs while laying the foundation for long-term economic success."

"Redirecting recovery funds would represent a critical step towards ensuring a robust human spaceflight program and a strong sign that we will not cede America's leadership in space," added Kosmas. "I thank my Florida colleagues for coming together to support this important issue, and I strongly urge the President to shift at least \$3 billion in unspent recovery funds to NASA's human spaceflight program as soon as possible."

Kosmas, Posey and Nelson were joined on the letter by Florida Representatives Tom Rooney (R-FL-16), Kendrick Meek (D-FL-17), Corrine Brown (D-FL-3), Alcee Hastings (D-FL-23), Ron Klein (D-FL-22), Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D-FL-20), Adam Putnam (R-FL-12), John Mica (R-FL-7), Kathy Castor (D-FL-11), Alan Grayson (D-FL-8), Robert Wexler (D-FL-19) and Ander Crenshaw (R-FL-4) and Senator George LeMieux (R-FL). The Texas Congressional Delegation also sent a similar letter to the President earlier this month.

"Currently, our space program amounts to less than one-percent of the total federal budget," Senator Nelson said. "Yet the program has always paid back dividends greater than the initial investment. Diverting unspent stimulus funds to NASA will ensure the U.S. remains a technological leader."

"There's a lot of stimulus money that's not scheduled to be spent for many years into the future that could be used immediately to keep jobs right here in the Space Coast," said Congressman Posey. "If the objective of the stimulus was to spur growth in key sectors of our economy known to produce good paying jobs and cutting edge technologies, then increased investment in our nation's space program is an appropriate use of unspent funds. The President has the opportunity both to make the best use of stimulus funds and to devote them to his promise to close the gap and keep America first in space."

The full text of the letter to the Appropriations Committee can be found below:

Dear President Obama,

We are writing to you regarding the future of our nation's human space flight program and its impact on Florida. As you know, we face many critical decisions in the coming months that will affect America's space program for decades to come.

The Augustine Commission's finding that we cannot conduct meaningful space exploration within current budget constraints is alarming. Our nation's technological supremacy, which was cemented by the Apollo program, should not be abdicated due to insufficient funding. We believe the commission's recommendation for an additional \$3 billion annually above the FY2010 budget request should be implemented without delay to enable a viable space exploration program.

Continuing on what the Augustine Commission called "an unsustainable trajectory" will adversely impact our nation's competitiveness and leadership in technology and innovation. Ceding our leadership in space exploration will have an especially negative impact on Florida, where the Kennedy Space Center has served as our nation's gateway to space since 1962. Approximately 4,000-7,000 direct jobs are thought to be at risk; each direct job equals roughly 2.82 jobs statewide and \$2.1 billion in household income. In FY2008, NASA's economic impact across Florida totaled \$4.1 billion.

Technologies developed by our human space flight program and research conducted on the Space Shuttle and International Space Station improve the quality of life for all Americans. They also help address significant challenges facing our nation, such as developing alternative domestic energy sources, improving health care, strengthening commerce and communications, and studying changes in the Earth's climate.

To realize our shared goals of preserving our unique and valuable aerospace workforce, minimizing our human space flight gap, maximizing the investment we have made in the International Space Station, and ensuring our nation's continued leadership role in science and technology, we ask that you provide NASA with the necessary leadership and resources recommended by the Augustine Commission.

We urge you to direct at least \$3 billion in unobligated funds approved in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) to our space exploration program. Given the ARRA's goals of stimulating our economy, supporting science, and maintaining and creating high-tech jobs, we believe there is no better place to dedicate these funds than to our human space flight program.

An infusion of resources will not only provide economic stimulus to communities across our nation, but it will provide NASA with the resources needed to reduce the impending space flight gap, preserve high-tech jobs, and minimize our dependence on Russia for access to space.

We stand ready to partner with you in achieving these important national goals and we hope you will take action to ensure a robust human space flight program.

Sincerely,

Suzanne Kosmas

Bill Posey

Bill Nelson

Tom Rooney

Kendrick Meek

Corrine Brown

Alcee Hastings

Ron Klein

Debbie Wasserman Schultz

Adam Putnam

John Mica

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